



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Fire Island National Seashore News Release

Release date: Immediate

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Phone number: 631 289-4810 x 221

Date: April 15, 2004

Release code: 04-01

Passing of Fire Island Superintendent Dave Spirtes

Patchogue, NY— Fire Island National Seashore staff and park partners were deeply saddened to hear that highly regarded superintendent, David Spirtes, had succumbed to cancer early this morning. Dave had only been in charge of Fire Island’s National Park Service site for less than a year, but his contributions were monumental. Almost everyone who dealt with Dave professionally—park staff, Fire Island residents and other park neighbors and stakeholders—respected his quiet forthright nature and honesty, and his determination to arrive at agreeable solutions without sacrificing the integrity of the resources he was entrusted to protect and preserve.

Dave came from Alaska as superintendent of Western Arctic National Parklands to direct operations at Fire Island National Seashore on Long Island. Superintendent Spirtes was a veteran NPS manager with a wide range of experience in diverse geographical regions of the United States. When he was selected as Fire Island National Seashore’s superintendent, NPS Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust stated, “Dave Spirtes is just the perfect mix of seasoned professional and sophisticated park manager. The record shows that he believes in partnership and community involvement.” “Clearly, he is the right choice for the future of Fire Island,” Rust said when his selection was announced, and his short time on Long Island has proved her choice was right.

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Dave Spirtes, a native New Yorker, began his NPS career thirty-one years ago as a seasonal park ranger at White Sands National Monument. He spent several more seasons at national parks including Grand Canyon, Everglades, and Glacier, before committing to a career job at Gulf Islands National Seashore in 1977. Spirtes was promoted to a subdistrict ranger position at Yellowstone National Park, then to chief ranger at Glacier Bay National Park. He also served as chief ranger at North Cascades National Park. In 1994, Spirtes first rose to the rank of superintendent at Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. Dave was selected as Superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore in May, 2003.

The recipient of numerous awards for wilderness management, assisting with the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill response, managing search and rescue operations and safety, Spirtes was honored with the Secretary of the Interior's Meritorious Service Award in 2000. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science (1970) prior to joining the NPS, he served as a pathfinder and infantryman with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam.

Dave's illness appeared suddenly and advanced quickly. He leaves behind wife, Kathy, and their young daughter Alexandra, two brothers, Richard and Peter, a sister, Judy, and a bereaved staff from his National Park Service family.

The family is planning a private memorial service. Memorials, in lieu of flowers, may be sent to: Friends of Fire Island National Seashore, David Spirtes Memorial Fund, P. O. Box 504, Patchogue, NY 11772-0504, or the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, David Spirtes Memorial Fund, 4640 Captree Island, Captree Island, NY 11702-4601. Please include the statement "In memory of Dave Spirtes."

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